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*Songs
of
Seven
Years*



*Sydney
Rowe*



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SONGS OF SEVEN YEARS

BY
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BOSTON
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY

1913

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AN INTRODUCTION

The heart has thoughts too sacred for the tongue—
Or, if at all the profane oracle
Have leave to babble them, they must be said
In riddles, as the secrets of old fanes
Once unto men thus darkly were disclosed
In the flawed mirror of such speech as mine.

The curious foot, irreverent, presses now
Among the fallen sacred columns old
Of those mute temples; now within my breast
The alien presences may take their way
But hear no fateful voice or, if at all
They hear, oft guess not what the sound implies.

The sad, deep whispers of mysterious lips
Are borne upon me—if ye hear, attend!

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SONGS OF SEVEN YEARS

STORM

STORM breaks upon the mountains. Heaven
and earth

Answer each other's thunders, from the base
Of wave-dashed cliffs even to the utter height
Of visible heaven. Black-winged clouds dis-
close

Keen lightnings quivering in their breasts a
moment ;

Then all the shapes of Nature seem to share
In the oblivion of death.

The floods

Of heaven are opened on the earth. Anew
The mighty pall of darkness is rolled back.
The lifted wave, the steep-walled mountain-
range,
The gray clouds shrinking from the middle
glare,
Are fixed in intense outline on the brain
Long after sight has lost them. Suddenly
O'erhead the thunder's mighty cymbals clash
With peal on peal of sound.

A wild bird's cry

In answer rings !

O vast Confederacy
Of air and fire, the once-upheavèd earth
And the still heaving ocean, chainèd calms
And wind-lashed tempests with their myriad
tongues,—
Yea, and the silent stars, beyond their call,
That keep the changeless courses of wide
heaven,—
The greatest wonder of the Universe
Is Life, defying thee to reign alone!

MY TRYST

NIGHTLY I keep my tryst with one fast holden
A captive far away;
When the deep west from green and red and
golden
Has faded into gray

I feel a sweet insistence in my being
That draws me from the earth,
Until, as dewdrops mingle in their fleeing
From places of their birth,

My calmer thoughts and those that fain would
ever
In distant channels stray
Are drawn together in one happy river
That runneth on alway

Till—the great depth of calm our spirits hold-
ing
In a sweet rest supreme,
The shadowy cloak of slumber round us fold-
ing—
I kiss the lips of Dream!

“TAKE THOU MY SONG”

TAKE thou my song!
My song shall live with thee;
Then in thy grave
My song shall buried be.
'Tis fame enough
That thou art kind to me!
Rich, rich my song
To live—to die—with thee!

AN APOLOGY FOR SORROW

As the showers to wakening Earth
 In the April days,
So our sorrow is to mirth
 Along life's ways.

Chide us not, that we should weep
 When we might be gay;
Mirth itself must sometimes sleep,
 Or waste itself away.

WANDERER'S SONG

My heart has taken pilgrimage
O'er many miles and many years;
But for my birthright's heritage
My heart at last goes back with tears.

O golden valleys! golden hills!
So early loved, and lost so long!
Again my sight with splendor fills;
Again ye touch my lips to song!

THE WALK

A WIND went swimming through the grain.
Our feet were happy to be free.
We laughed and talked and laughed again.
The wind blew raindrops from the tree.

We went into the wood-shadows.
The wind did not care very much
For dead old brush and stones and those.
We left; we were quite glad of such.

The bold wind met us, like a man.
One walked each side the tiny path.
Below the brown, soft turf it ran.
The wind a grey, last year's leaf hath.

We wandered as the water does.
The wind sang like a little flame.
The wind said all our words for us
Till by the shadowy brook we came.

The wind went laughing from the brook.
We followed after, by and by.
I know not what way our feet took.
The wind and we told earth goodbye.

We came unto the lake, I think.

It was all strung for the wind's lyre—
I saw the strings and fingers wink.

Our hearts were our own harp and choir.

The wind had led us home again—

We parted where the leaves were thinned.
The sun saw us make promise when
We'd next go walking with the wind.

“STRONG HEART THAT FEAR’ST TO
DIE”

STRONG heart, that fear’s’t to die,
Pass not this blossom by,
Pure as the morning sky,
 Frail as a tear.
This flower knoweth death,
Rendereth up its breath,
Fadeth, and vanisheth,
 And hath no fear.

“WHEN IN DIM WAYS THAT
HEARKEN TO OUR TREAD”

WHEN, in dim ways that hearken to our tread,
Fearful, we see we know not what thing take
Shape from our fears, if we can then awake
Our senses from the druggèd drowse of dread,
And, with eyes forward strained and fixèd head,
Make loath acquaintance with the phantom
drear,

Relief comes sudden as a hard-shed tear
On seeing that from which we would have fled.
Yea, spirits oft, more deep in tenderness

Than sighing wind as one to sleep departs,
Take, in life's doubtful night, funereal dress
And eyes that watch unseen and chilling
breath

Of horror; yet if we bravely play our parts
We find them harmless—even the one called
Death!

THE POETS' POET

SOOTHED with thy songs, I almost take af-
fright

Whene'er a dazzled critic, vexed, half raves
At these—the toyings of thy spirit light—

Thy whirlwind coursers, thy enchanted
caves.

Alas, he and his kin ne'er fully yet

Found out all splendid mysteries of the
night:

Though earth's proud heirs search all that
steep is set,

Some orbs there be that are beyond their
sight.

Well may these hail on high the rosy sign

Of one who held his thistle to their hearts!

That for their comfort: but a loftier line

Looked up, and were made glad through all
their marts,

When thy clear spirit clove its shadowy bars
Within the heaven of heavens, a star unto the
stars!

THE BUILDERS

FOUR-SQUARE they lay, the unfinished pyra-
mids;
And round them swarmed the innumerable
mites of toil,
Only less countless than the sands that spread
Leagues west, leagues south, leagues east,
leagues north from them.

How did they build?—in blind despair alway
Of seeing a final block heaved past the
scourge?—
Or shown that what they wrought should dawn
on earth
An answering sign for heaven's securest star?

Haply some poet, reeking 'mong that throng,
Took station on the visionary top
Ere yet the substance rose, and, gazing thence,
Saw age on age sink into dust before him.

LONELINESS

Nor highest splendor of night—
Nor lowest glimmer of dawn—
Nor twilight's elfin delight—
Refresheth me, now thou art gone,

Because I watched them with thee—
Because thy seeing led mine
To see things hidden in the tree,
In the hill, in the star's eyes, and thine!

IN ABSENCE

ERE I went sailing from thy sight
I sware in whisper low
My heart should ope to no delight
Save that I loved thee so.

A wind made all the ocean rough
For miles and miles along;
I could not drink me joy enough
Of such a shout and song!

The wind went off, and all the stars
Came forth about the sea;
My heart flew to thy window bars
And dwelt all night with thee!

THE QUEEN

WHEN in her youth she sat from state,
Great respite grew of jesters great,
Who revelry before her made
And loudly sang and loudly played.
“Play on! Play on!” she oft would say;
“My heart grows merrier day by day
For joys of souls in voices dight,
And laughter of the lute’s delight!”

But when long years had faded her
Like strown gray leaf, that scarce will stir,
Where in the palace-court she lay,
With languid hands and looks away,
She said, “Draw near, ye choristers,
And harpers on slow dulcimers,
That with your solemn, saddening sound
My life may run her final round.”

MARJORIE

IN the bower that was her choice,
Luting to her tender voice,

Sat my Marjorie.

Passers all, that her did spy,
'Gan a-twinkling of the eye

At my Marjorie.

She had heed for string and ditty;
For their hearts she had no pity,
Marjorie, my Marjorie!

But when I came sadly by,
Slow of foot and mild of eye,

By my Marjorie,

Then she snapped refrain and string,
Then the sweet came hastening—

Why, my Marjorie?

'Cause she'd have no fool to love her,
And chose me, that seemed above her?—
Marjorie!—my Marjorie!

THE RAMBLE

WHEN the glad morning beckoned at the door,
We went out toward the hilltops to explore.
Strong winds all night had held the dew away,
So that the drifting grass was dry as hay,
Swaying each side the smooth path pleasantly;
And so no mist-drops trickled from the tree;
And we walked without question anywhere.

Great upland fields, by sheep cropped almost
bare,
We entered; the stiff mulleins stood around;
But very barren was the rocky ground.

We looked away and saw the leaf-hid town—
A million green leaves over roofs of brown!
One sharp, white spire stood highest, tipped
with gold;
And village streams made glimmerings manifold.

Then the slow upward slope our steps beguiled;
Halfway we found a small brook running wild;
While, somewhat further, two great rocks together,
Which shone like ebon in the sunny weather,
Rose from the turf. We saw about their bases
Cool-shadowed ferns outlined in feathery
traces.

But we passed on until with hastening feet
We neared and running gained the summit.

Sweet

It is to stand where scarce is room beside
For anyone to come and share your pride;
So there we stood, all in the mighty air!

Beyond the gulfs of hollow valleys fair
The hills in faint blue distance were withdrawn;
And over them the far-off skies went on;
And all took splendor from the lofty sun!

And so we praised the prospect, one by one;
And, having looked awhile, we turned toward
home.

Morning had seen us go—noon saw us come!

THE APPROACH OF SPRING

ERE yet is grown the lily of the valley
That in broad leaves hides up its crystal
bells,

While yet on chestnut lawn and woodland alley
Only the shade of the bare branches dwells,
Even now the sun is gently, gently creeping
Out of the hard old bonds of ice-cold cloud;
Even now the rivers are but lightly sleeping

Under their shining robes; and every crowd
Of sparrows making harsh the chill, shrill
breezes

Makes us remember birds of velvet voice;
And all the world that fades and binds and
freezes

Will hold, ere long, gifts of a happier choice.
So, sit we waiting, and, all suddenly,
A robin circles down from yonder tree!

REMINISCENCE

IN the free days of childhood I have perched,
Light as a bird, on such a swinging bough
As o'er me mocks my decorous limbs but
now—

O the wild wind-rush through the leaves!—how
lurched

The restive branch whereon I sat, besmirched
Perhaps with pine gum or the sticky flow
From the horse-chestnut buds! Now I must
go

In sober cleanliness, and leave unsearched
The airy chambers of the wild tree-top.

Ah, well! perhaps even now I've gone too
far—

Let some loose thoughts outrun my dignity.
Man lives to watch his business—tend his
crop—

Not to career in wingèd Fancy's car.

And yet, it was so happy to be free!

TRANQUILLITY

O LOVELINESS of the unbroken day—
When, with no sorrows frowning on its way,
No dreary heart-throbs urging it to end,
It moves with man as an inviolate friend!

And after sunset, may th' attempered night
Yield us no anguish with its softened light,
But ever watch above our slumber mild—
Like a tired mother over a tired child.

“THE SUNSHINE DOTH NOT BLAZE
UPON THE EARTH”

THE sunshine doth not blaze upon the earth
This afternoon, but lieth as a veil
Over the woodlands, marvelous and pale.
The faded meadows, waiting spring's green
birth,
Oppose their dreary flats to that wan mirth.
The pools yet glimmer in chill coats of mail;
And sharp, dark forms of far-flown swallows
sail
Athwart the clouds that crowd the world's gray
girth.
And yet, in gazing on this scene I feel
A melancholy languor, that is sweet
As music heard from far; and yet I know
That art awaits me, and the toil for weal,
Whereof my sense is loath, filled with such
glow
As for one wasted hour makes recompense
complete.

REMEMBRANCE

WE may forget old Friendship;
We may forget old Love;
We may forget old Longing
For blessed souls above;
But we shall yet remember
And we shall yet be true
Long as in gray December
There comes a gleam of blue!

The clouds may darken round us,
The winds roar in our ears,
Our hands wear out their cunning,
Our eyes shed all their tears;
But time is never weary
And hath all things in hold;
And though the path be dreary
It brings us to the fold!

Return, O Love and Friendship
And Longing for the Lost!
Speak tenderly and sadly
Unto us, tempest-tossed;
And guide us into harbors
Like pilots wise and strong;
For safe in fair green arbors
All sea-blown souls belong!

THE SEA-MAIDEN

I HEARD a footstep on the sea
As I sat waiting drearily
For the ship to come and take me home,
And bring me home to thee.

I heard—I saw; I heard a step—
I saw a maiden on the sea!
Her eyes and hair made her more fair
Than any one but thee!

She beckoned me! She called to me!
Monotonously as the sea
Her voice came to me—and slipped through
me,
Thinking but of thee.

Another sat beside me there.
He saw her eyes; he saw her hair;
She becked and called him; she enthralled him;
He went to her lair!

She willed him to her with her eyes;
Then with her hair, in wildest wise,
She wound him, prisoned—strangled—bound
him,
Dragged him down, never to rise!

YOUTH'S REPLY

I HEAR the sullen minstrel sing
How all delight is on the wing,
And nothing here with us may stay
Save leaden-weighted sorrows gray.

O minstrel, thou wilt sure remain,
And thine own words shall be thy chain;
But if my joys take flight with laughter
I'll make words wings and follow after!

AT THE WINDOW

THE dusk grew close and dense against the
pane.

She, cheek in hand, leant staring, tense and
still.

The firefly's spark flashed out, and flashed
again.

Across the hard, gray path she watched in vain
For one who loved her, though the love was
ill.

She sat, and did not move or speak or sigh.

Sometimes her husband's parting kiss be-
came

A brand still laid across her lips; but high
And patient was her glance, that seemed to try
If it might pierce the shadow like a flame.

Quick steps across the lawn were like a dart
To shock her heart from life; then, swift and
sweet,

A flock of kisses, as with secret art,
Drew all the warm, sweet savor of her heart
Through her sweet-thrilling lips with thrills
as sweet.

And then with all its tresses and its flowers
She put her warm, brown head into his
breast,
And cried, "Oh, save me from these barren
hours!

Take me away where love may all be ours!
Save me from him I cannot love the best!"

And wept, and sobbed, "Oh, from my husband
save!

For you alone I live; for you I die
If death must be; but oh, before the wave
Turns seaward, slay and lay me in my grave,
Or take me in your arms to hold for aye!"

Then suddenly she saw her husband's face—
White as a stern, white cliff, and stern, and
still;
And suddenly he burst from her embrace
And rushed into the darkness; while the place
Rang with a cry, "My heaven is turned to
hell!"

THE SPELL RETAINED

I SAW thee once of old,
Where the deep, green meadows rolled,
 And the hills stood round about,
 And the sun shone overhead;
We walked and talked awhile;
And thy language held no guile,
 Yet a charm was on my thought,
 And a power my footsteps led!

I met with thee but now,
And we did but glance and bow,
 And there was no time for talking,
 And our ways were separate ways;
But still I felt upon me
The same soft spell that won me
 When first we two went walking
 In the old rural days!

ON THE TERRACE

WE on the westward-rounding terrace sat
Together; all the rest had entered in.
The sun shot radiance from beyond the hills.
A sole, sweet star hung halfway to the south.
The low clouds lay like smoke along the wood.

There in the dusk I felt thy presence grow
Into a temple of all purity,
In which I sat a breathing worshiper,
While all things round insensate seemed o'er-
spread
With that which made them sacred unto thee
And to the twilight, thy preferred hour,
O goddess gentler than the quiet eve,
To whom I offer incense of dim song
And sacrifice of everlasting love.

Sitting by thee, I look on the sweet world
Which seems a shadow of thy loveliness.
The darkness imperceptibly as sleep
Settles upon the land more closely; now
Star after star is gradually discerned
About the calm, dim dome; on earth, more near,
The fireflies come and go, inconstant stars;
And the clear waters glimmer to the skies.

Voice there is not, save of the marshy throng
That from the distance are distinctly heard,
And now and then a faint, sweet note that floats
Out of the dark, mysterious trees, and thrills
The soul as if the utterance were its own.

Thou stirrest but a finger, and my sense,
Long in forgetful contemplation lost,
Returns to thee:—as when some deeper strain
Of that same music which taught loveliest
thoughts
To the dim brain at length breaks in upon them,
Shattering all sense but of the melody.

Thou and the peaceful night fulfill for me
All longings nurtured in my fiercer hours.
I am content with all things as they are.
Hope, labor, sorrow, cease; for thou art all
I hoped for, all I labored to deserve,
All that has been a balm for sorrow; thou
Art the whole aim and remedy of life,
And life's one sweeter gift than death, to me!

Thou speakest, and my selfish thoughts are
shed;
And all my happy calm becomes desire
To serve and gladden thee. What wilt thou
have?
Rise up—the night is chill: let us go in.

INSPIRATION

DEAD calm is on the waters. Leisurely
The slow wave rises and the slow wave falls.
No voice to the still fleet awakening calls;
Dull as the creek that drains the sand-hills
dry
Is all the sea, and duller all the sky,
Thick clogged with stagnant clouds. The
shrouds and falls
On all the craft slack inward. Slowly palls
The water, with a darker shade on high.
Suddenly all is changed; a breeze comes on;
Great sails are moved; smooth-sided hulls
glide through
The swelling waters; life is on the sea!
So to my heart, whose laughter long was gone
Into the burial shade life's clouds bestrew,
There comes a moment of bright energy.

ON SOME STRAY VERSES

WALKING beside the sea, I wrought a song—
Or it mayhap was fashioned in the wood
That shapes its edges to the winding coast,
Or even inland, in some undefined
Spot amid villages and streeted towns;
I cannot recollect the place,—but through
My song there breathed the salt air's shudder-
ing breath,
Dank with the floating foam; one seemed to
hear
A low sea-undertone of washing waves
Amid the cadence of the verses wild;
And one who found them on an Autumn day
Read them among the yellowed woodlands then;
And he forgot the crisp, sweet Autumn breath;
And he forgot the frost upon the grass;
And he forgot the falling leaves; he saw
Only the rolling waves, and heard alone
The thunder of them; and his heart was glad.

FRAGMENT OF A NARRATIVE POEM

My tale is of the fortunes of a knight
Who fought with old King Arthur and his men
In the rude days miscalled of chivalry,
When Britain was well-nigh a wilderness.
He is not named in legends that have crept
Through the dim maze of years down to our
time ;

For in a mighty battle, that was fought
Early in Arthur's luster-gathering reign,
He fell nigh dead beneath an axe's blow,
And for a long time in a doubtful place
Remained as one whose ears and lips and eyes
Are as they were not to him having them ;
And afterward he was removed away—
Not yet recovered of his fearful wound—
Into the midst of comrades who had camped
In a green forest near where he had been ;
And here he slowly grew like one alive.
But they that brought him being folk not
known

Of them to whom they brought him in his pain,
He could not learn what place it was where he
Had lain so long in stupor or dull dreams,
(For a long time it was since last he drew
His sword, or set his lance against the foe),
And so he might not touch the friendly hands
That there had ministered to his sad state,
But only blessed them in his heart betimes.

And prayed that succor they might find at need ;
And, as he now was able to depart
And go unto his king at Lyonesse,
He thither set his face, in company
With others of his comrades like of mind,
Traveling with them on horses through the
woods.

Now, both while he had lain recovering
From that dire wound by camp-fires of his
friends,

And while he journeyed now with health re-
vived,

There had grown up among his various
thoughts

Remembrances of things beheld or dreamed
In that long darkness which his wound had
kept

About him in the place he knew not of.

It seemed that he had sometime gazed dull-
eyed

On a low ceiling, ridged with stubborn beams,
And dusky with the grime of backward years,—
And that once, as he lay upgazing there,

He had seen for a moment over him

Bending so fair a face, he could not tell

Where he had seen a fairer ; though his eyes

Had looked on lovely Guinevere, the Queen,

And many a fair-handmaiden of her train,

And many a lady at the tournament,

And many another woman here and there.

SUPPOSED THOUGHTS IN A SICKROOM

I TIRE of being shut in painful gloom,
Of sitting with myself within my room;
I tire of days with neither speech nor tune,
Of rest that wearies, shelter not immune
From plaguing thoughts and impotent desires.
I would the stars were mine with all their fires!
I languish for the moon's light and the sun's!
I would that I might sit where water runs!
I would that leaves might shadow me, and
winds

Breathe incense such as Araby's and Ind's
Into my nostrils, and that birds might tease
My languid ears with passionate melodies!
For days are but as shadows unto me,
And nights the same—I know not which times
be;

I care not which, unless I move with them.

Somewhere away, along a forest's hem
There runs a swirling brooklet, shallow and
wide,
And half in shade and half in sun, beside
Full many a rock fringed round with tender
ferns,
And pigmy beeches, that the sunlight burns,
And long, green, shadowy grasses stirred with
wind.

There, in late summer, ere the leaves were
thinned,
I from beneath wide glooms of oak forth
stepped
Upon the pebbled marge. Cool breezes crept
Amid the overhanging foliage where
The sparkling waters played. Would I were
there!

MOTHERHOOD

O BLESSEDNESS of this—above all strife
For glory, and all victory, and all pain,
This one thing worthy in a whole vain life,
To clasp—all things made possible again!

THE ISLAND

A LAND in the midst of the sea!
A water-girt region of green,
Where the wings of the wind sweep free,
And the shafts of the sun strike keen.
A land that was chosen to be
For a portion of man's demesne.

On the verge of it, sand is and stone;
But inland are meadows and trees,
And villages lying alone
In the midst of them, while to the breeze
Stand forth the low hills, that are strown
As beacons far-seen from the seas.

In my childhood, I ranged on the hills,
And the meadows I made my delight;
I roamed in the woodland that fills
The hollow, and looked from the height;
I wandered by day with the rills,
And slept in the village at night.

And my heart still is tender with love
For that fair foster-mother of mine,
Whose nursling I was, who above
All mothers save one was divine
In the sight of my boyhood, whereof
Still murmurs the wind in the pine.

TO ANNE

Now, if one blossom smiles upon the air
This morning, I will pluck it you, and bear
All of its dew and fragrance that I can
Into the desert of your chamber, Anne!
I will not tell you of the wakened world,
Lest you despair, on this dim couch upcurled—
Not tell you of the tenuous poppies tall,
How the rich buds break open, and let fall
The scoopèd husks; and I will not make known
To you the vagrant wind's delicious tone
Among the fresh, green leaves, that dance and
 sway
As if to charm with gayety the day.

If I were a magician, you should see
The dewy world of morning, pace with me
A little way across the webbèd grass,
Where bright-eyed robins startle as you pass,
And sunlight glitters into pearl and gold;
But, ah! these glories never will grow old,
Though ancient as the sun that gave them
 birth!
So, do you still have patience; and the earth
Will seem more beautiful than e'er before
To you, dear Anne, when you are strong once
 more.

OUR MAPLE

A STURDY maple stands between
The garden gay and lawn so green;
And there beneath its leafy screen,
 In heat of summer weather,
We sit and watch the shadows play,
Like troops of elves at holiday,
Or gloomy thoughts, that shift and sway
 With brighter ones together.

The great green leaves above us blow
As the wind listeth, to and fro;
And sounds among them come and go,
 More soft than brooklet's murmur.
The straight, clean trunk so smooth and round
Is like a pillar time-imbrowned;
It will not sway though gusts abound,
 But seems to stand the firmer.

But all the branches overhead,
One thinks, are delicately led
To motion, and the air do tread
 So gracefully and slowly
It almost puts one's thoughts to sleep
To watch them so demurely keep
Moving, as the slow airs do sweep
 About them, breathing lowly.

And so beneath our maple we
Sit, while the days go drowsily
Along their ways, and time's slow sea
At high tide hangs uncertain ;
And so, all the midsummer days,
The maple hath our thanks and praise,
As unto us it bends and plays,
And shields us with its curtain.

ON A PICTURE

SHE feels the freshness of the air
That lifts her garments and her hair;
She hears the ripple of the stream
Newly released from its long dream;
The ground is soft beneath her feet,
And April's freedom wild and sweet!

She strays along the waterside,
And suddenly, in their golden pride,
She sees full many a daffodil
Upon the border of the rill!
She stoops and plucks one here and there,
And wonders at a thing so fair.

She need not wonder, for she is
Herself more fair than daffodillies!
Her face is eager as the spring;
Her lips are tender, as to sing;
Her eyes serene as heaven's own blue,
Yet lighted as with sunlight, too!

To me a memory she doth bring,
As here I watch her wandering.
Alas! she makes me think of her
For whom my heart doth liveliest stir—
Doth liveliest stir, and lapse again;
For I have hope of only pain.

TRISTRAM

A FRAGMENT

ALONG the coast rode Tristram all alone;
And the gray sea moaned round him in the
tone

The sea-wind carried in his ears; but he
Heard nothing of the moaning of the sea,
Saw nothing of the vast, gray waters there
That rolled beneath a vast, gray sky; the bare
Stretches of sand beneath his horse's feet
He saw not, but saw ever, as the fleet
Hawk sees before it a swift pigeon gone,
That flees from it yet ever lures it on,—
Saw ever, as a struggler in the sea,
Close in the vessel's wake, sees pause and flee
The vessel he would fain be with—a face
Fair as the “sunshine in a cloudy place,”
A face leant eagerly toward his own,
With calm, clear eyes, that yet,—as of the
stone

Men prize is said,—held an imprisoned fire,
A fervent, curtained luster of desire,
And wishful lips shut up together close
As if with further fervency, and those
Eyes—lips—framed in a crescent of dark hair,
But all the face white as the lily fair
And fair as the white lily; all alone
That face he sees; or if at all be known

A rival to it in his sight—lo, there,
Leaning in mastery over her dark hair,
A lank and sinewy figure, to dispel
With the will's effort, as a nightmare fell
That vexes one just dreaming of his love;
But sometimes he, as in that dream whereof
His vision was the likeness, by too much
Power shook the specter off, and losing such
Horror, lost too such beauty as he had
Been dreaming of; a loss to make one mad,
But soon restored; so ever he rode on
And saw alone these things, all else foregone.

A SUMMER STROLL

I ROSE, and walked, one summer afternoon,
Out from the house where I was stopping, soon
To leave the lordly mountains and my friends,
Returning . . . but forget that pleasure
ends!

Wander with me—while warm, slow breezes
sweep

Over the meadows—toward the bastion steep
Of yonder wooded hillside, where deep shade
Romantic rocks and mossy clefts hath made
Even in the broad noontide; and let rough care
Fall off somewhere asleep, drunk with the
languorous air.

Up, and toward the forest-hooded top
Of this green eminence! 'Twere vain to stop
Here, or yet here, in hopes to drink the view;
For these deep pines no eye can well pierce
through.

So, swift with slipping feet, we now descend
The further slope, till pines with hemlocks
blend,

And these with maples, and, because we must,
We come to a fenced highway, bare, and white
with dust.

Out from the wood, through hot hay-fields it
runs.

Grasshoppers chant their drowsy orisons
In one wide congregation; overhead,
Vast, blue and sun-inflamed, the sky is spread.
Who moves, that moves not toward a beckon-
ing goal?
Ours is the leafy shelter of this shaded knoll.

We mount, and from a terraced slope behold
A lovely prospect, that the hills enfold—
The awful, ancient hills, that awe and charm
The spirit, as their pines with shades and balm
And whispering music haunted. Here are
vales

So richly green that the wild fairy tales
Of childhood scarce seem less than plausible
In moments when the breast delights to swell—
Fed with authentic glories. Far and faint
Appears, as still the sight o'erleaps restraint,
A glimmer from the breast of blue Champlain,
Close by that ruined fort which fell without a
stain;

And, standing here and gazing there afar,
Strange thoughts of old days come—romance,
and buried war.

TO —

THOU takest Earth in change for Heaven!—

Thou leavest what thou canst not prove!

The wounds are healed, the wrongs forgiven;

And Friendship reigns in place of Love!

FLOWER SONG

LET the lustrous lily go
To the altar; spare the glow
Of the crimson rose to be
Worn in beauty's rivalry.
Let the pansy's leaves be shed
On a buried lover's bed,
And the bright forgetmenot
Wither like a love forgot.

LOVER'S SONG

O THERE's earth and rock about the land,
And water in the sea;
But in my heart, but in my heart,
There's only love for thee!

O there's many a flower blooms in the wood;
In the fields the flowers we see;
But in my heart, but in my heart,
There's only love for thee!

O there's many a song the wild birds sing,
At home on the forest tree;
But in my heart, but in my heart,
There's only love for thee!

O there's many a king hath jewels rare,
And silver and gold in fee;
But in my heart, but in my heart,
There's only love for thee!

RONDEAU

I WONDER where my love can be!
Last night he did not come to me.
A month has flown since first we met,
And never has he failed me yet;
And that he loves me well I know,
For often he has told me so;
And then—O what a treasure 'tis!—
He gave me many a loving kiss.
Last night he did not come to me.
I wonder where my love can be!

TO THE MOON

MYSTERIOUS Presence! that, adorned with light,
Dost make thy neighboring dwelling-place
on high,
Thee would I honor. While sleep shuts the
sight
Of others, still thou dost compel mine eye.

O lovely and imperial orb afar!—
Perfect thy movements are;
And thou are clothed in beauty excellent!
When thou discoverest thyself to air
Mid starry spaces bare,
Or, on a night storm-rent,
Amid the clouds heaven's awful vault which
bow,
How beautiful art thou!

Long has thy praise been sung
By many a tuneful tongue
Since Homer called thee worthy to be hymned;
Nor is thy luster dimmed.

On earth, young men and maids whom Venus
guides,
And happy bridegrooms, too, and happy
brides,
Have oft adored thee.
The mighty ocean-tides
Are yearning toward thee.

Winter beholds thee chastened yet benign,
In sceptered calm divine;
Thou meltest through the balmy summer
nights,
Scattering entranced delights.

O moon! with happy rapture thou dost fill me!
And let me not dismay
If the sweet hopes which now awake to thrill
me
Should vanish with the day:
For thou wilt come again to walk the heaven;
So hope, too, will return
What time thou pourest through the silent
even
Fresh streams from thy bright urn.

THE EVENING HOUR

BEYOND the hill or distant wood or circle of
the plain
Sink softly out of sight, sweet sun, till morn
bring thee again.
Come, softest shadow, softest light, that
mingle everywhere;
And come, ye faint first stars of heaven; and
come, ye dewes of air.
Descend, sweet peace of eventide, from the
calm depths above;
Bring, memory, the sweet images and tones of
those we love;
And unto me, O brooding heart, O Mother Na-
ture mild,
Bring unto me sweet songs of rest, even unto
me thy child.
And thus, sweet Hour, walk through the land
with grave and gentle mien,
Like the blest ghost of one long dead that
visits us unseen.
Let the tired world from labor cease and put its
sorrows by—
A little while to feel thy power, ere shuts the
weary eye.

TO TRANQUILLITY

THOU, that hast left thy home in Paradise,
And stoop'st in love to ease our mortal sighs—
What is it that thou dost not do for us?
Art thou not ever near, solicitous?
Thou goest with us in the weary way;
Thou shar'st the burdens of the vexing day;
Thou art the pilot when Ambition sleeps;
Thou calmest the affrighted in the deeps;
Thou hoverest o'er our slumbers, quick to still
The unquiet dreams and entering thoughts of
ill;
In calm or strife, o'er rough or easy ways,
Thou art the gentle comrade of our days.

But oh, th' unlucky hour when thou de-
part'st!—
When, at some wanton mood, dismayed thou
start'st,
And, rising up on rapid pinions wide,
Cleav'st the dim sky, no more to be descried
Till, through a hell's black torture having
passed,
The penanced pilgrim wins thee back at last.

Where, when thou flee'st afar, dost thou
abide,
Resting thy wings, at quiet eventide?

In no far desert or mid-ocean isle
Can'st thou find refuge and thy fears beguile—
For often, at that holy hour which fills
With twilight shade the bosom of the hills,
Thou com'st upon us from the voicèd wood,
And with thy presence feed'st our solitude.

Aye, the deep wood is eloquent of thee,
With grave and solemn utterance, speaking
free
Its oracles to every passing wind;
And other haunts thou hast, and peace can'st
find
To charm thy senses in the courts of song;
Nor doth sweet friendship not to thee belong.

Brief is my lay; but thou shalt honored be
Long as within this world of misery
These treasures in thy nature thou dost bear—
Peace without weakness, riches without care,
Health, that doth trouble not his own sweet
rest,
And wisdom, loving ever what is best.

THE CHIEFTAIN

LET me unfold a tale whose setting lies
In Italy. Imagine, if you will,
A lonely scene, a landscape bare and wild,
Lake, wood, and hill, and cross, and ruined
tower,
And, journeying up a steep and rugged way,
A worn and solitary traveler.
Look! he has reached the cross, the emblem old
Of that most sorrowful of travelers;
And at its foot he humbly kneels to pray.

But what wild throng is this, that sallies forth
From yon enmossèd ruin, fierce horsemen armed
And loosely ranked, in martial disarray?
Forward they ride, and at their head seems one
More noble yet less native than the rest,
Who wears fierce looks, the weapons of command.

Beware, thou lonely, friendless traveler!
Beware, I pray thee, of this outlaw band—
For such they seem, that bear no banners
proud

Nor mark nor ensign of authority:
Too late, too late, alas!—with foul intent,
Careless of reverence or of courtesy,
They are upon thee; with drawn sword one
stands

Upon his stirrups, ready to strike thee down,
But first exulting in most hideous glee
Ere he lean down to smite thee; one displays
An empty pannier, and with wolfish eyes
Stares at thy well-filled scrip, thy journey's
stay.

Hardly they look upon thee; not one face
Is lit with pity or solicitude;
And lo, the heavens themselves are kindlier;
For now the sun, from 'neath an uprolled cloud,
Shines at its setting and illumines thee.
Thy gray, thin hair, thy shoulders stooped with
years,

Thy patient, earnest face, are radiant now,
As if to melt those iron hearts to tears
Even at the thought of doing harm to thee.
In vain; unterrified at their design,
Though all its horror blaze, they set upon
thee;—

When lo, an arm is interposed between;
And fierce commands detain; swift they obey,
Unwilling, for their leader 'tis commands,
Who, finding one still nursing his desires,
Is wroth, and, turning round with furious face,
Unhorses him sheer from the saddle down;
Then turns, and soothes the startled traveler's
fears.

But see, those fears have changed to wonder-
ment.

What pain is this? Why shakes the old man
so?

Why doth he stretch his arms out to the chief
And sob aloud?—and now he climbs a horse,
The one whose rider was o'erthrown but now;
And he that rode must lead the beast along.

This way they come; see, round the old man's
waist

The chieftain's arm is twined, and heavily
The chieftain's head hath fallen on his breast;
And hark, the old man saith, "My son! My
son!"

THE DAY OF REJOICING

ALL night the wild wind ceaseth not from its
bemoaning:

What shall it do with what it hath for woe?
Like an eternal spirit remorse is aye assailing,
It wrestleth with its grief and will not let
it go.

So hath my heart made moan through dark,
wild nights of sorrow—

Deep lamentation uttered to the void above.
Oh, lives there not in all the spaces some To-
morrow

That yet shall bring us healing on the wings
of love?

O that some golden day might float on rainbow
pinions

Out of the fair, white heaven we cannot see
When Night hath made obscure her vast and
lone dominions—

O that one morn might break whose noon un-
dimmed should be!

EVENSONG

SLEEP a little! What is night
But a refuge from the light?
Sleep a little, and forget
That old Earth is toiling yet.

Sleep, and do not fear;
For if Death come near
He will haply pass thee by,
Since thou dost so quiet lie.

Sleep a little! Ease thy pain.
What is worth thy while to gain?
Sleep a little, ere To-morrow
Give thee back the cast-off sorrow.

Sleep, and as a flower
Drop the passing hour—
Care not if Time's end it brings;
Thou art not with mortal things.

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